

09/92679
531 Rec'd PCT/ 20 DEC 2001

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Masao WATANABE et al.

Serial No : Not Yet Assigned (National Phase of PCT/JP01/03567)

Filed : Concurrently Herewith (International Filing Date April 25, 2001)

For : VESSEL CHARTER SUPPORTING SYSTEM, SERVER AND DATABASE THEREFOR, AND METHOD OF SUPPORTING VESSEL CHARTER

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to the examination of the above-identified patent application on the merits, the Examiner is respectfully requested to amend the specification and claims as follows:

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows (a marked-up copy of the specification amendments is provided as an attachment to this Amendment):

Paragraph beginning at page 58, line 26 (Amended-Clean Copy):

Fig. 28 is an example of the initial screen of the Clean Recap Negotiation Room screen 79 on the owner side in Fig. 26. Contents of a charter are displayed in the upper part of this screen as in Fig. 27, and an Amend button 166 and a Back button 167 are provided in the lower part. An owner clicks the Amend button 166 when the owner negotiate the displayed contents of a charter and clicks the Back button 167 when the owner returns to the enquiry confirmation screen 77. Further,

since the owner cannot lift subjects of a charter or regard a charter as failed, a Lift button and a Sub Failed button are not provided as in a screen of a charterer. Here, when the owner clicks the Amend button 166, the owner and a charterer can start a negotiation.

Paragraph beginning on page 62, line 26 (Amended-Clean Copy):

When the charterer clicks the Append button 192, contents of the selected clauses are added in the Other special Orders editing area 193. A situation in which clauses are added is shown in the editing area 193 of Fig. 34. A part denoted as 194 is an added part. When the charterer clicks a Send button 195 in this state, the contents shown in the editing area 193 are displayed on the screen on the owner side without change (Fig. 25, S152). Contents changed by the charterer are displayed in an editing area 201 and an On Sub Recap 199 on the screen on the owner side shown in Fig. 35. In the On Sub Recap 199, it is more preferable if a part changed by the charterer 200 is displayed with a color different from that of the part other than the changed part as in the above-mentioned case. In addition, the owner can change the added clauses displayed on the editing area 201 that are received from the charterer and return them to the charterer. In this case, the owner clicks a Send button 202 after changing them. When the owner clicks the Send button 202, the change is also reflected on the screen on the charterer side (Fig. 25, S153).

Paragraph beginning on page 63, line 17 (Amended-Clean Copy):

At the time of agreeing to contents changed by the other party of a negotiation in such a manner, the charterer clicks an Agree button 197 on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks an Agree button 204 on the screen (Fig. 35) (Fig. 25, S154 and S155). At the time of canceling the changed contents entered in the editing areas 193 and 201 without transmitting them to the other party of a negotiation, the charterer clicks a Withdraw button 196 on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks a Withdraw button 203 on the screen (Fig. 35). At the time of suspending the negotiation, the charterer clicks a Suspend button 198 on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks a Suspend button 205 on the screen (Fig. 35).

Paragraph beginning on page 68, line 18 (Amended-Clean Copy):

If the Position List is clicked, a position list screen of Fig. 44 is displayed. In Fig. 44, the owner clicks a name of a vessel that the owner wishes to update among displayed names of vessels 260 in Fig. 44. Here, although vessels of other companies are displayed on the list, the vessels of other companies can only be inspected and the owner can update its own vessels only. When the owner clicks any of the names of vessels 260 a screen of Fig. 45 is displayed. On this screen, positional information of the vessel is displayed in an area 261, and the owner clicks an Edit button 262 at the time of performing update or clicks a Back button 263 when returning to the previous screen.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows (a marked-up copy of the claim amendments is provided as an attachment to this Amendment):

4. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to

claim 2,

characterized in that said screen for entering predetermined information

includes a screen for entering indication information for said owner to enter an

indication to said enquiry information from said information terminal for an owner

and presenting the indication information to said charterer.

7. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to

claim 5,

characterized in that said screen for displaying indication information is

provided with an expression of intention information entering section for

designating an owner with whom the charterer negotiates and expressing an

intention for shifting to a negotiation.

9. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1,

characterized in that said control unit causes each of said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner to display a screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation in negotiating a vessel charter.

11. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 9,

characterized in that a list of a plurality of items of a negotiation is also displayed on said screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation and contents of the items of a negotiation agreed upon are displayed in association with each item of a negotiation in the list of the items of a negotiation.

13. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 12,

characterized in that said screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation has a first message entering section for entering a message to be shown to the other party of a negotiation which is not reflected on said contents of a vessel charter and a first message displaying section in which the message entered in said first message entering section is shown to the other party of a negotiation.

14. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 12,

characterized in that said contents of a vessel charter is contents of a vessel charter with conditions, and said screen for entering predetermined information in said information terminal for a charterer is provided with a conditions lifting entering section for entering to the effect that conditions are lifted with respect to the above-mentioned contents of a vessel charter with conditions, a charter failure entering section for entering to the effect that a charter is failed to be concluded and change entering section for entering to the effect that said contents of a vessel charter with conditions are changed.

18. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15,

characterized in that said change entering screen is provided with a change contents displaying section for displaying said contents of change entered by said other party of a negotiation.

20. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15,

characterized in that said change entering screen is provided with an agreement on change of conditions communicating section for informing said

party of a negotiation to the effect that the contents displayed on said contents of change displaying section is agreed upon, and, if the parties of a negotiation mutually agreed, agreed contents of change are reflected on said contents of the vessel charter with conditions.

21. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15,

characterized in that said change entering screen has a second message entering section for entering a message to be shown to the other party of a negotiation which is not reflected on said contents of change and a second message displaying section in which a message entered in said second message entering section is shown to the other party of a negotiation.

22. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 14,

characterized in that, if an entering is made by said conditions lifting entering section from said terminal for a charterer, said control unit regards said contents of the vessel charter with conditions as contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted.

23. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system, according claim 22,

characterized in that said screen for entering predetermined information in said information terminal for an owner includes a confirmation screen for confirming said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted if an entering is made by said conditions lifting entering section, said confirmation screen is provided with a confirmation entering section for entering to the effect that the owner confirmed said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted and said control unit transmits said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted to said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner if an entering of confirmation is made by said confirmation entering section.

24. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1,

characterized in that said storage unit includes a second database in which position information of a plurality of vessels, and said control unit displays the position information of vessels registered in said second database as a position list based on predetermined information entered from said information terminal for a charterer.

26. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 24,

characterized in that said system further comprises a position information update entering section for updating position information of a vessel to be displayed as said position list, and said control unit updates said second database based on update information entered by said position information update entering section.

27. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 24,

characterized in that said storage unit includes a third database in which detailed information about each vessel that is displayed in said position list is registered, and said position list is provided with a detailed information request instructing section for causing said information terminal for a charterer to display said detailed information about each vessel based on said third database.

29. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 27,

characterized in that at least one of said position list and a display screen on which detailed information about each vessel that was displayed in said position

list is displayed is provided with an enquiry information entering section for making an enquiry concerning the displayed vessel.

30. (Amended-Clean Text) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1,

characterized in that a history concerning a vessel charter entered into between said charterer and said owner is stored in said storage unit.

34. (Amended-Clean Text) The method of supporting a vessel charter according to claim 32,

characterized in that said concluded vessel charter is a vessel charter with conditions, and the method further comprises:

a situation entering step in which said charterer enters any one of situations in that conditions are lifted, a charter is failed or conditions are to be amended using said information terminal for a charterer to communicate the situation to said owner;

an amendment entering step of displaying a screen for entering predetermined condition information on said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner with respect to conditions that said charterer desires to amend to cause said charterer to enter contents of amendment

for the conditions if the situation entered in said situation entering step is amendment of conditions; and

an intention determining step of entering determination of an intention on whether or not said charterer and said owner agree with each other about the contents of amendment entered by them, and said situation entering step, said amendment entering step and said intention determining step are repeated until lifting of conditions or failure of a charter is entered in said situation entering step.

39. (Amended-Clean Text) The program for supporting a vessel charter according to claim 38,

characterized in that said negotiation step comprises:
a first step of displaying a list of a plurality of negotiation items on each of the display screen of said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner and at the same time displaying a predetermined screen for entering information for one of items that are not negotiated among said plurality of negotiation items to cause said charterer and said owner to enter contents of the negotiation;

a second step of asking whether or not said charterer and said owner agree on the contents of the negotiation entered by them and causing them to indicate determination of intentions; and

a third step of setting to display the agreed contents of the negotiation with respect to said one negotiation item in said list of the negotiation items in association with said agreed negotiation items and returning to said first step, and that said negotiation step repeats said first to the third step to conclude a vessel charter by filling necessary negotiation items in said negotiation items with the contents of the negotiation.

40. (Amended-Clean Text) The program for supporting a vessel charter according to claim 38,

characterized in that said concluded vessel charter is a vessel charter with conditions and the program further comprises:

a situation entering step in which said charterer enters any one of situations in that conditions are lifted, a charter is failed or conditions are to be amended using said information terminal for a charterer to communicate the situation to said owner;

an amendment entering step of displaying a screen for entering predetermined condition information on said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner with respect to conditions that said charterer desires to amend to cause said charterer to enter contents of amendment for the conditions if the situation entered in said situation entering step is amendment of conditions; and

an intention determining step of entering determination of an intention on whether or not said charterer and said owner agree with each other about the contents of amendment entered by them, and said situation entering step, said amendment entering step and said intention determining step are repeated until lifting of conditions or failure of a charter is entered in said situation entering step.

REMARKS

By the above amendment, the specification and claims have been amended to correct minor errors and the claims have been amended to delete multiple dependency.

If there should be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
Masao WATANABE et al.

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MARKED-UP COPY OF SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Paragraph beginning at page 58, line 26 (Amended):

Fig. 28 is an example of the initial screen of the Clean Recap Negotiation Room screen 79 on the owner side in Fig. 26. Contents of a charter are displayed in the upper part of this screen as in Fig. 27 [28], and an Amend button 166 and a Back button 167 are provided in the lower part. An owner clicks the Amend button 166 when the owner negotiate the displayed contents of a charter and clicks the Back button 167 when the owner returns to the enquiry confirmation screen 77. Further, since the owner cannot lift subjects of a charter or regard a charter as failed, a Lift button and a Sub Failed button are not provided as in a screen of a charterer. Here, when the owner clicks the Amend button 166, the owner and a charterer can start a negotiation.

Paragraph beginning on page 62, line 26 (Amended):

When the charterer clicks the Append button 192, contents of the selected clauses are added in the Other special Orders editing area 193 [188]. A situation in which clauses are added is shown in the editing area 193 of Fig. 34. A part denoted as 194 is an added part. When the charterer clicks a Send button 195 in this state, the contents shown in the editing area 193 are displayed on the screen on the owner side without change (Fig. 25, S152). Contents changed by the charterer are displayed in an editing area 201 and an On Sub Recap 199 on the screen on the

owner side shown in Fig. 35. In the On Sub Recap 199, it is more preferable if a part changed by the charterer 200 is displayed with a color different from that of the part other than the changed part as in the above-mentioned case. In addition, the owner can change the added clauses displayed on the editing area 201 that are received from the charterer and return them to the charterer. In this case, the owner clicks a Send button 202 after changing them. When the owner clicks the Send button 202, the change is also reflected on the screen on the charterer side (Fig. 25, S153).

Paragraph beginning on page 63, line 17 (Amended):

At the time of agreeing to contents changed by the other party of a negotiation in such a manner, the charterer clicks an Agree button 197 [192] on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks an Agree button 204 on the screen (Fig. 35) (Fig. 25, S154 and S155). At the time of canceling the changed contents entered in the editing areas 193 and 201 without transmitting them to the other party of a negotiation, the charterer clicks a Withdraw button 196 on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks a Withdraw button 203 on the screen (Fig. 35). At the time of suspending the negotiation, the charterer clicks a Suspend button 198 on the screen (Fig. 34) and the owner clicks a Suspend button 205 on the screen (Fig. 35).

Paragraph beginning on page 68, line 18 (Amended):

If the Position List is clicked, a position list screen of Fig. 44 is displayed.

In Fig. 44, the owner clicks a name of a vessel that the owner wishes to update among displayed names of vessels 260 in Fig. 44. Here, although vessels of other companies are displayed on the list, the vessels of other companies can only be inspected and the owner can update its own vessels only. When the owner clicks any of the names of vessels 260 a screen of Fig. 45 is displayed. On this screen, positional information of the vessel is displayed in an area 261, and the owner clicks an Edit button 262 [62] at the time of performing update or clicks a Back button 263 when returning to the previous screen.

MARKED-UP COPY OF AMENDED CLAIMS

4. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 2 [or claim 3],

characterized in that said screen for entering predetermined information includes a screen for entering indication information for said owner to enter an indication to said enquiry information from said information terminal for an owner and presenting the indication information to said charterer.

7. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 5 [or claim 5],

characterized in that said screen for displaying indication information is provided with an expression of intention information entering section for designating an owner with whom the charterer negotiates and expressing an intention for shifting to a negotiation.

9. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1 [any one of claims 1 to 8],

characterized in that said control unit causes each of said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner to display a screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation in negotiating a vessel charter.

11. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 9 [or claim 10],

characterized in that a list of a plurality of items of a negotiation is also displayed on said screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation and contents of the items of a negotiation agreed upon are displayed in association with each item of a negotiation in the list of the items of a negotiation.

13. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 13 [9 or claim 10],

characterized in that said screen for entering information for each item of a negotiation has a first message entering section for entering a message to be shown to the other party of a negotiation which is not reflected on said contents of a vessel charter and a first message displaying section in which the message entered in said first message entering section is shown to the other party of a negotiation.

14. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 12 [or claim 13],

characterized in that said contents of a vessel charter is contents of a vessel charter with conditions, and said screen for entering predetermined information in said information terminal for a charterer is provided with a conditions lifting entering section for entering to the effect that conditions are lifted with respect to the above-mentioned contents of a vessel charter with conditions, a charter failure

entering section for entering to the effect that a charter is failed to be concluded and change entering section for entering to the effect that said contents of a vessel charter with conditions are changed.

18. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15

[any one of claims 15 to 17],

characterized in that said change entering screen is provided with a change contents displaying section for displaying said contents of change entered by said other party of a negotiation.

20. The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15 [any one of claims 15 to 19],

characterized in that said change entering screen is provided with an agreement on change of conditions communicating section for informing said party of a negotiation to the effect that the contents displayed on said contents of change displaying section is agreed upon, and, if the parties of a negotiation mutually agreed, agreed contents of change are reflected on said contents of the vessel charter with conditions.

21. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 15

[any one of claims 15 to 20],

characterized in that said change entering screen has a second message entering section for entering a message to be shown to the other party of a negotiation which is not reflected on said contents of change and a second message displaying section in which a message entered in said second message entering section is shown to the other party of a negotiation.

22. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 14

[any one of claims 14 to 21],

characterized in that, if an entering is made by said conditions lifting entering section from said terminal for a charterer, said control unit regards said contents of the vessel charter with conditions as contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted.

23. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system, according claim 22,

characterized in that said screen for entering predetermined information in said information terminal for an owner includes a confirmation screen for confirming said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted if an entering is made by said conditions lifting entering section, [and] said confirmation screen is provided with a confirmation entering section for entering to the effect that the owner confirmed said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions

are lifted and said control unit transmits said contents of a vessel charter from which conditions are lifted to said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner if an entering of confirmation is made by said confirmation entering section.

24. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1 [any one of claims 1 to 23],

characterized in that said storage unit includes a second database in which position information of a plurality of vessels, and said control unit displays the position information of vessels registered in said second database as a position list based on predetermined information entered from said information terminal for a charterer.

26. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 24 [or claim 25],

characterized in that said system further comprises a position information update entering section for updating position information of a vessel to be displayed as said position list, and said control unit updates said second database based on update information entered by said position information update entering section.

27. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 24

[any one of claims 24 to 26],

characterized in that said storage unit includes a third database in which detailed information about each vessel that is displayed in said position list is registered, and said position list is provided with a detailed information request instructing section for causing said information terminal for a charterer to display said detailed information about each vessel based on said third database.

29. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 27

[claim or 28],

characterized in that at least one of said position list and a display screen on which detailed information about each vessel that was displayed in said position list is displayed is provided with an enquiry information entering section for making an enquiry concerning the displayed vessel.

30. (Amended) The vessel charter supporting system according to claim 1 [any

one of claims 1 to 29],

characterized in that a history concerning a vessel charter entered into between said charterer and said owner is stored in said storage unit.

34. (Amended) The method of supporting a vessel charter according to claim 32 [or 33],

characterized in that said concluded vessel charter is a vessel charter with conditions, and the method further comprises:

a situation entering step in which said charterer enters any one of situations in that conditions are lifted, a charter is failed or conditions are to be amended using said information terminal for a charterer to communicate the situation to said owner;

an amendment entering step of displaying a screen for entering predetermined condition information on said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner with respect to conditions that said charterer desires to amend to cause said charterer to enter contents of amendment for the conditions if the situation entered in said situation [above-described] entering step is amendment of conditions; and

an intention determining step of entering determination of an intention on whether or not said charterer and said owner agree with each other about the contents of amendment entered by them, and said situation entering step, said amendment entering step and said intention determining step are repeated until lifting of conditions or failure of a charter is entered in said situation entering step.

39. (Amended) The program for supporting a vessel charter according to claim
38 [37],

characterized in that said negotiation step comprises:

a first step of displaying a list of a plurality of negotiation items on each of the display screen of said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner and at the same time displaying a predetermined screen for entering information for one of items that are not negotiated among said plurality of negotiation items to cause said charterer and said owner to enter contents of the negotiation;

a second step of asking whether or not said charterer and said owner agree on the contents of the negotiation entered by them and causing them to indicate determination of intentions; and

a third step of setting to display the agreed contents of the negotiation with respect to said one negotiation item in said list of the negotiation items in association with said agreed negotiation items and returning to said first step, and that said negotiation step repeats said first to the third step to conclude a vessel charter by filling necessary negotiation items in said negotiation items with the contents of the negotiation.

40. (Amended) The program for supporting a vessel charter according to claim 38 [or claim 39],

characterized in that said concluded vessel charter is a vessel charter with conditions and the program further comprises:

a situation entering step in which said charterer enters any one of situations in that conditions are lifted, a charter is failed or conditions are to be amended using said information terminal for a charterer to communicate the situation to said owner;

an amendment entering step of displaying a screen for entering predetermined condition information on said information terminal for a charterer and said information terminal for an owner with respect to conditions that said charterer desires to amend to cause said charterer to enter contents of amendment for the conditions if the situation entered in said situation entering step is amendment of conditions; and

an intention determining step of entering determination of an intention on whether or not said charterer and said owner agree with each other about the contents of amendment entered by them, and said situation entering step, said amendment entering step and said intention determining step are repeated until lifting of conditions or failure of a charter is entered in said situation entering step.